

Benefits Gained from Y2K Activities

We met the challenge of making sure that EPA could continue its mission and serve the American public as we enter the next century. The investment to prepare systems for the Year 2000 (Y2K) was essential to assure ongoing operations and effective response to environmental emergencies. We averted what would have been certain disruptions in core business areas and key services and, in the process, realized greater efficiencies through investments in new technologies and the streamlining of many business processes.

What improvements/benefits have resulted within EPA as a result of Y2K Preparations?

- Internal systems and facilities were fully operational and available for all of EPA's 18,000+ employees to report to work as usual on Monday, January 3, 2000.
- We did not reinvent the wheel for Y2K. The Agency used existing emergency operations framework (i.e. National Incident Coordination Team - NICT) for coordinating Y2K preparedness and response activities involving multiple parts of the Agency. The aforementioned framework including the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was used as a broader information gathering and decision system.
- Y2K has taught us that senior management needs to be involved in information technology (IT) on an ongoing basis, since IT cuts to the very core of how program offices and regions conduct their business.
- A high level information technology management committee (i.e. Senior Year 2000 Council) was created to manage all Agency Information Resource Management (IRM) Y2K efforts. This committee can continue to engage in major IRM directions for the Agency.
- Resources expended for Y2K not only ensured that IT was Y2K compliant, it modernized our IT assets and infrastructure. The Agency also was able to retire old and outdated systems and software, and consolidate LAN server operations.
- The Y2K project provided program offices and regions a comprehensive and current inventory of their IT infrastructure (e.g. hardware, software and license) and processes. We now know asset information by organization, which has never been available before.
- As a result of Y2K, improved configuration management processes to keep track of technologies used and the functions performed have been instituted.
- Communication within and among the various program offices and regions has strengthened as a result of the Agency's Y2K project. Provided an opportunity for many programs to work together and recognize interests that each have at various community levels.

- The Y2K project demonstrated the value of forming partnerships across traditional boundaries to achieve a common goal. In addition to showing us the increasing interconnectedness of organizations through technology. Y2K preparations provided another good avenue to work with State counter-parts, thus building on our good relationship with them.
- Y2K efforts already expended are a significant leg up on moving forward on developing a working Disaster Recovery program for the Agency. Y2K demonstrated the need for effective well-planned Business Continuity and Contingency Plans (BCCPs) and Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs). Agency contingency plans were developed and tested to ensure operability. Contingency plans developed for Y2K will be shared with the Agency's information security program in support of Presidential Decision Directive - 63 (PDD - 63).
- Several regions identified alternate disaster recovery locations that could be used if primary locations are unavailable. The disaster recovery, data and phone backup, and emergency plan benefits from all the preparation work have significant value for our future operations - routine and emergency.
- One advantage that CEPPO gained from Y2K transition preparations was putting together ready to use references (i.e. disks, CDs, hardcopies) on Chemical hazards. Having the aforementioned readily available prevented a total reliance on Internet sites, especially since the Government was concerned about being able to access those sites for needed information over the Y2K weekend. Lesson to remember - not to rely too heavily on computer networks in time of an emergency- always have backup tools. Thanks to Y2K we now have these references and tools ready at hand for other emergency or preparedness events.
- Enhanced outreach with Water and Chemical sectors- The Office of Water was able to strengthen partnerships and communications with the drinking water and wastewater communities. EPA adopted a non-regulatory stance in working closely with the Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA) and the smaller chemical trade associations which also helped to forge a strong partnership.
- Y2K preparations provided another good avenue to work with State counter-parts, thus building on our good relationship.